Spotlight on transformation

A Developmental Services Bulletin from the Ministry of Community and Social Services

Adult Protective Service Workers

This issue of Spotlight is dedicated to Adult Protective Service Workers. We share their stories and tell you what they do to help adults with a developmental disability live independently in the community.

We also update you on the first regulation for Ontario's new developmental services legislation, and we introduce a new online history of developmental services in Ontario.

The Adult Protective Service Worker (APSW) Program

The APSW program started in Hamilton in 1974. Its goal was to support adults with a developmental disability who live in the community without a family or support network close by.

For 35 years, APSWs have provided adults with a developmental disability who live independently with social support and guidance. They advocate on behalf of people with a developmental disability and help manage personal issues.

About 150 APSWs work across the province. APSW programs are run by ministry-funded organizations, such as child and family service associations (like the Sarnia Family Counselling Centre), multi-service community centres (like York Community Services), district health programs and municipal social service agencies. Some community living associations (like Community Living Toronto) and other developmental service providers (like Developmental Services of Leeds and Grenville) also manage APSW programs.

2008 Policy Guidelines for the APSW Program

- In October 2008, the ministry released updated policy guidelines for the APSW program. The original guidelines were from 1982.
- The policy guidelines outline the role of an APSW. They also help the organizations that run the program develop procedures that reflect APSW guiding principles.
- The ministry worked with members of the Adult Protective Service Association of Ontario to update and modernize the 1982 guidelines. We also held focus groups with people who use APSW supports and surveyed APSWs and managers of the program.
- The 2008 guidelines contain updated language and incorporate Ontario's new developmental services principles.

What does an APSW do?

An APSW works directly with adults with a developmental disability who live on their own in the community. They help them strengthen their daily living skills. This involves supporting them in areas like housing, financial and legal dealings, family and parenting, and health, safety and well-being.

APSWs also help people with a developmental disability to build a network of connections in the community. They help them apply for and participate in different community and government services.

APSWs work to develop a trusting, respectful and voluntary relationship with the adults they support. Adults with a developmental disability have control over the type of support they receive and the goals they pursue. They actively participate in the relationship.

In Their Own Words

APSWs from across Ontario share their stories, and someone who works with an APSW tells us what his support worker means to him.

Sudbury's APSW Program

The APSW Program in Sudbury has evolved over the past decade to meet the changing needs of the people it supports. In 1999, the program added lifeskills training to address the needs of John (not his real name).

John had been discharged from a number of agencies due to what was deemed severe self-abusive behaviour. As a last resort, our program was approached to provide John with support.

Initially, John required over 80 hours of support each week to meet his needs. The program hired and coordinated part-time, one-to-one instructors to educate John in essential lifeskills. An APSW managed John's supports and began working with him and his family to develop a comprehensive life plan.

Initially, family members were appalled at the notion of John living independently in the community with support. They needed a great deal of education to adjust to this idea. John was also shocked that he was asked how he wished to live and that he was supported in his goals.

Gilles Goulard,
APSW Sudbury

At the beginning, John struggled to transition to independent living. He constantly tested the limits of his freedom and needed to learn how to assume responsibility for his actions.

His family was outraged that John was "allowed" to make choices about his behaviour and needed guidance and education about John's rights as an adult. John had to learn responsibility for poor choices and to accept the consequences of his actions.

John's greatest obstacle to successful community living was his poor social skills. He had difficulty establishing relationships. Over time, his lifeskills trainers and APSW were able to help him build and maintain meaningful relationships.

Today, John is a fully included and independent member of the community. He doesn't require lifeskills assistance, but still needs the ongoing support of his APSW. He works part time and has attended literacy and numeracy courses. Although he still relies on his APSW for emotional support, advocacy and case management, he can manage with approximately two hours of support per week.

Our APSW program has had many successes by ensuring that people retain control over their lives and have opportunities to learn community living skills. The APSW role has evolved to fit individual needs yet remains true to its principles.

Gilles Goulard, APSW
Sudbury

A Farmer's Story

In June 1988 I met Brent — an 18-year-old man planning to move from a youth group home in Waterloo. As many teenagers do, he wanted to be independent, live on his own and make his own decisions. His dream was to be a farmer like his father, who he only saw a few times a year. He was ambitious, full of energy and loved to work.

Unfortunately, he also had epilepsy and difficulties reading, writing and understanding things he got in the mail. Over the early years of our work together, he was in and out of the hospital many times. Each hospitalization was a setback for his ultimate goal of farming. He didn't want to live in the city where he felt there were too many temptations to spend money recklessly and have nothing to show for it. He felt stuck in a never-ending circle of cheap rooms, unsatisfying jobs and, of course, frequent trips to the hospital.

As time went by, Brent and I made connections with the local farm community. We found a landlady in a small, nearby town who took an interest in his well-being. She helped him understand the importance of a regular diet and ensured he took his medication daily until he was confident

taking it himself. Through an ever-growing circle of friends, mainly in the Mennonite community, he spent more and more time working on local farms. Over time, he gained control of his epilepsy to the point where he has not had a seizure in over 15 years.

In the years we have worked together, he managed to first get his snowmobile licence and, more recently, his driver's licence. First one local farmer, then another took an interest in him, and he was soon driving large farm machinery and helping out at several farms in his area. In the winter he works for local snow removal companies.

Brent's self confidence has grown and his circle of friends and acquaintances has expanded. He has travelled to the Dominican Republic with a church group to help build a school and has travelled in the USA with other church members. Last year he was inducted into his chosen church as a full member.

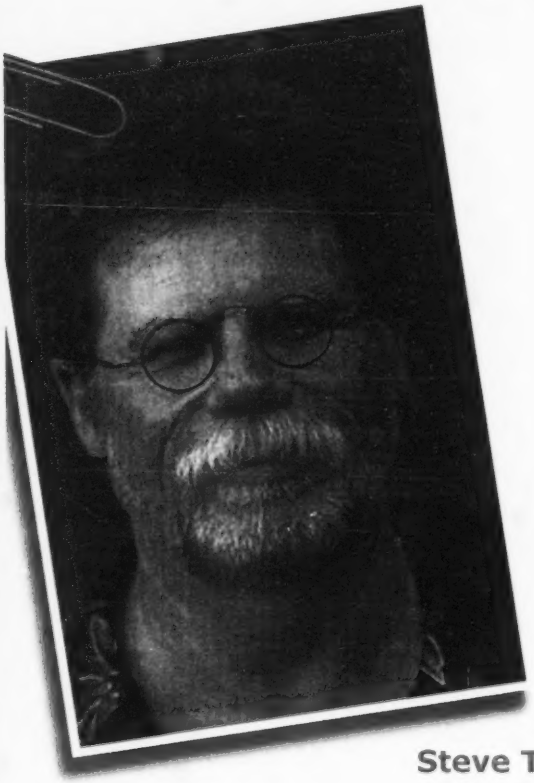
Looking back over the 20 years of ups and downs working together, it would be easy to say "I knew he would succeed." However, that's not the entire truth. Without the generous help of the people who gave Brent a chance to prove himself and his willingness to grow and try new experiences, the outcome could have been very different.

Peter J. Van Rooyen, APSW
Kitchener

The Difference of Having a Friend

Much of an Adult Protective Service Worker's role involves helping people who have fallen between the cracks of service. One of the things I hear most often from the people I support is that they are lonely. Over the 28 years I've been an APSW, I've tried to respond to this need for social opportunities by developing events like "Ladies' Night Out", gym and bowling programs. Not everyone enjoys group activities, though. This was the case for two individuals, a man and a woman, each living quite sheltered lives with their respective widowed mothers and neither having a friend in the world.

After getting to know them, I realized what these two had in common was their enjoyment of "old time" country music. After some negotiating, encouraging and skill building, I was able to introduce these two people to one another, and they immediately started to share their mutual love of this music genre. They became friends and got together to play albums, tapes and CDs from their collections. A bonus was that, through them, their mothers met and developed a friendship of their own.



Steve Tennant,
APSW Perth

Within weeks, they would spend afternoons together listening to music in the basement while the mothers visited upstairs. On other days, they would meet downtown without parents and spend the afternoon visiting shops, looking for music, having tea and enjoying one another's company. With some encouragement, they went to festivals and concerts together and spent time on the phone talking.

As a result of this friendship, both people have grown much more confident. When the woman's mother died, she was supported not just by her family who lived out of town, but by her friend and his mother.

The woman now has the confidence to continue living on her own. The gentleman gained enough confidence to move out and now shares a house with three other men. He remains in touch with his original friend on a regular basis. Isn't it amazing what friendship and a little music can do?

Steve Tennant, APSW
Perth

The Foster's Food Club

When Cathy saw a local food bank, she thought of how great it would be for the people she worked with to volunteer at one. She decided to set up a weekly "food club" at the Foster's Club, a drop-in centre operated by Community Living Toronto.

It took 10 months to organize and get approval from the Daily Bread Food Bank to operate the food club at Foster's. Working with their APSWs, people with a developmental disability can both use the food club and help run it. Volunteering there helps them learn teamwork and it makes them proud to help others in the community.

About 40 individuals and families use the Foster's Food Club on a regular basis and appreciate the variety of items available, including dry cereals, baby food, cleaning supplies and canned vegetables.

Here's what the people who volunteer and use the food club say:

- "I ask the people what they want. I also break down boxes and recycle them, and I unload the truck and sort the food for the people".

- "I like the people. I get along with them really well, and I like the healthy food too".

- "It's another helpful resource that APSWs can offer their people. The more resources we have, the better for our clients".

The new biweekly food bank at Foster's Club in Toronto has been a tremendous success thanks to the hard work and dedication of Cathy Randall, Lois Snow and its many enthusiastic volunteers.

The APSW staff at Community Living Toronto

News:

Attention Family Networks and Organizations

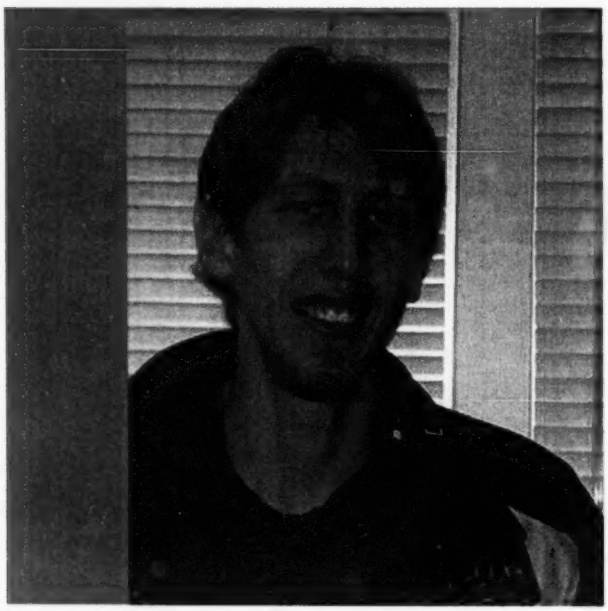
If you are part of a family group or network and would like to receive regular information and updates, please contact us at **DStransformation.css@ontario.ca**.

We'll send you electronic copies of Spotlight on Transformation, as well as additional information and updates to keep you informed.

What my worker means to me!

I have had a troubled upbringing - bounced from foster home to foster home. When I turned 18, I thought my problems would be over and I would be able to live a normal life like everyone else. NOT SO! I'm constantly reminded of my disability and talked to like my grasp of reality is lacking. I reluctantly agreed to have an APSW to help me.

I thought "there goes another worker" like all CAS workers, who will tell me how to live my life. Was I ever wrong. My quality of life would not be the same without my APSW.



Corey Willet,
Sudbury

I have few places where I feel no different than anyone else. My actions can be the same as most people but reactions differ from what most people receive.

I have had many rough times with the loss of my daughter as a result of a separation. I was reminded by my ex and CAS how I fall short when it comes to being a good and responsible parent. I went through a major depression.

Fortunately, my worker was the only person who was able to recognize my emotional troubles and got me much needed psychiatric intervention. He was the only one who would visit me in the hospital. With him, I was able to visit and talk freely knowing he would listen, understand and recognize where I was coming from. Any time I need advice or help dealing with my emotions, he has been there.

At appointments (medical, psychiatric, etc.) where normally I would be lost or confused, my worker is there to help me understand the information given to me.

My worker is there to advocate on my behalf with landlords who try to evict me unlawfully or not do their share of responsibilities. He has been there when I had roommates who wouldn't pay their share of the rent or tried to take advantage of me.

He has encouraged my personal growth in being confident, and as a result, I have been appointed, by my peers, as chair person of a self-advocate group for the past year.

Whenever I have fallen or been mistaken, he's been there. I can't count or put on a scale how many ways and things have been done for me.

I have confidence and a sea's worth of practical advice and the freedom of independence. He's been a constant in always shifting times.

For all the things I can do without, my worker is not one of them.

Corey Willet
Sudbury

The Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act

The ministry has posted the first regulation that supports the new Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008. It's called a Lieutenant Governor in Council regulation.

This regulation is still draft and has been posted on our website for everyone to comment on before it becomes final. Regulations define the details of legislation, so we need your input to create a law that works for everyone. We will consider all written comments and submissions as we prepare the final draft of the regulation.

The Lieutenant Governor in Council regulation will help us:

- determine if someone has a developmental disability and set qualifications for assessors
- define what an intensive support residence is
- identify services and supports that are eligible for direct funding, and
- set criteria for inspections and reviewing the takeover of an agency.

To learn more about the draft regulation and how to submit comments, visit **www.ontario.ca/community**. Go to the developmental services section.

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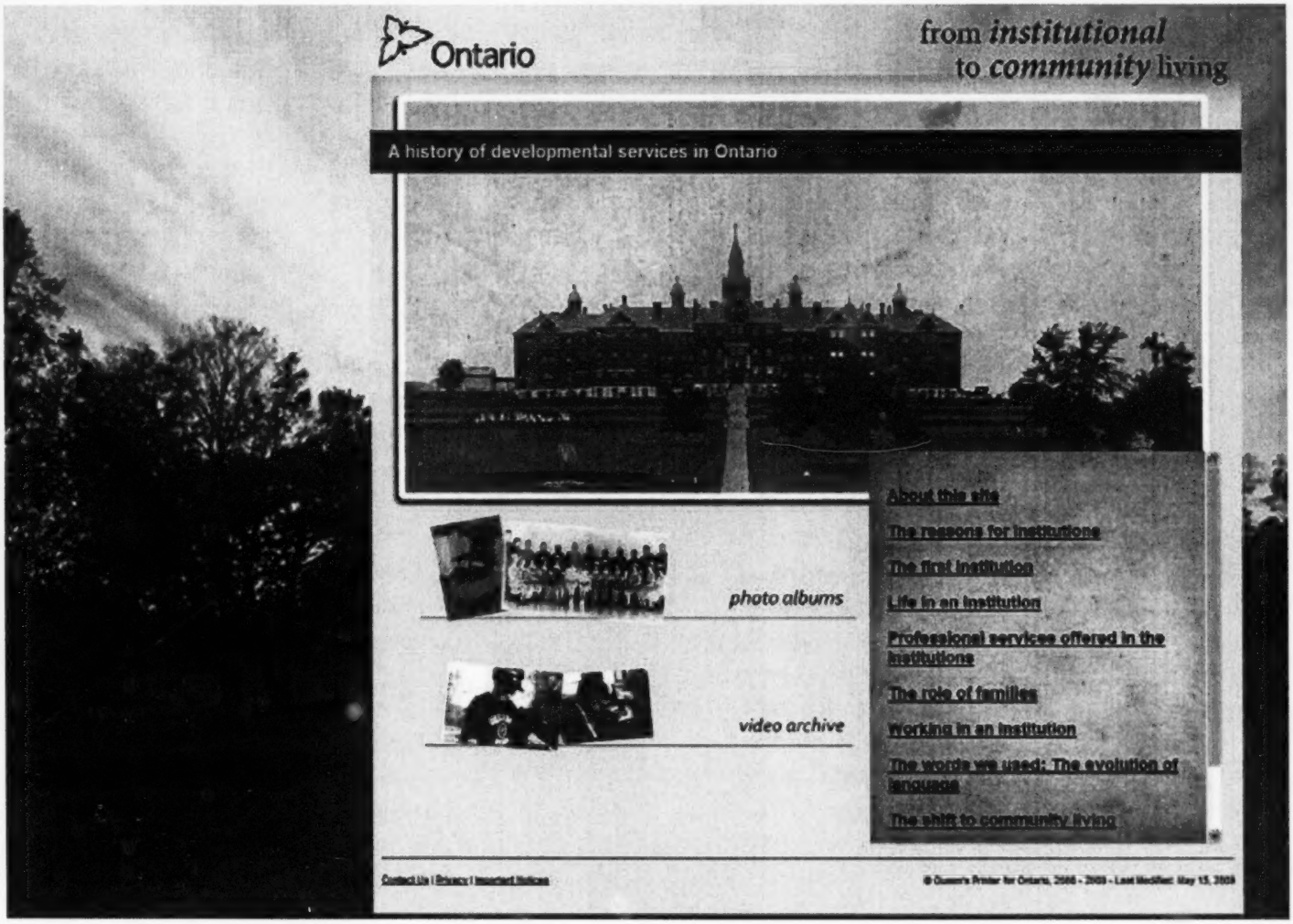
From Institutional to Community Living:
An Online History of Developmental Services in Ontario

March 31, 2009 was an historic day for Ontario. On that day, the government closed its last three institutions for people with a developmental disability, ending the era of institutional living.


Ontario
from institutional to community living
A history of developmental services in Ontario
photo albums
video archive
About this site
The reasons for institutions
The first institution
Life in an institution
Professional services offered in the institutions
The role of families
Working in an institution
The words we used: The evolution of language
The shift to community living

In partnership with Community Living Ontario and the School of Disability Studies at Ryerson University, the Ministry of Community and Social Services has created an online history of developmental services in Ontario. Through words, photographs and videos, you can find out why Ontario built institutions, why it closed them and what it would have been like to have lived and worked in them.

To learn more, visit **www.ontario.ca/DShistory**.

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This bulletin is also available online at:
www.ontario.ca/community

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You Asked Us:
The Adult Protective Service Worker (APSW) Program

Question:

Who can apply for APSW supports?

Answer:

You can apply at the organization that runs the APSW program in your area. The ministry regional office will tell you where to go. To find the regional office closest to you, call 1-888-789-4199.

Question:

Do APSWs provide supports for children?

Answer:

Generally, no. The APSW program is for adults.

But an APSW may offer advice and support to adults with a developmental disability who are parents about the type of services and supports that are available to their children. The focus is on the needs of the parent who has a developmental disability.

For more focused help on managing children's needs or for improving parenting skills, your APSW would refer you to services for children and those that specialize in parenting.

Question:

Where can I get a copy of the policy guidelines?

Answer:

You can get a copy of the 2008 Policy Guidelines for the APSW program from the ministry's website. Visit www.ontario.ca/community, and click on "publications".

Question:

Is there a professional association for APSWs?

Answer:

Yes. The Adult Protective Service Association of Ontario represents APSWs across the province. Its 100+ members support more than 6,000 people with a developmental disability.